

# CUD

“Cows Under Discussion” or “Something to Chew On”



September 2017

## Clinic News

We're in full swing now, with the routine calf debudding and metrichecking well underway, but the good old fashioned Spring emergencies continuing to flow in as well. The team is up to full strength, with the return of the wanderers, and the welcome addition of new techs Dana Fleming at Milton and Brad Storer in Balclutha. We haven't noticed the metabolic and mastitis problems of years past, but seem to have been called to a quite a few more calvings than normal.

Elsbeth has re-started Calf-Link for the season. This is an electronic newsletter distributed every couple of weeks to those who are “looking after the babies”. She has commented that calf scours cases are up a bit at this stage – for the latest info and advice, subscribe to Calf Link.

## Energy watch

Just a reminder that the best time to check cows for evidence of Sub-Clinical Ketosis (SCK) is from 5 to 14 days after calving. SCK is where the cows are in a negative energy balance, and ketone bodies are in the blood in greater amounts than normal, but they do not show the signs that you would normally see with clinical ketosis (not eating, depression and neurologic signs). There is a clear correlation between presence of SCK and reduced fertility, with recent NZ studies showing 7% lower 6-week in-calf rates in herds shown to be affected. There are also milk production and other health effects of SCK. Fifteen cows should be blood tested to assess whether this condition is affecting your herd. Please call us if you think this check could benefit your herd performance.

## Cow Abortions – using mouldy feed didn't pay off!

Anecdotally it seems there have been fewer abortions/cows slipping their calves on South Otago dairy farms this winter than other years. However, at a calving one evening this spring (a dead premature calf that was stuck deep down in the uterus), the farmer commented to our vet they had had four similar cases of cows also losing their calves early - all the calves were more than a month off their expected calving date, and all the cows seemed well at the time of slipping. When the placenta came away after calving this particular cow, it was covered in a thick matt of leathery snot. This was cultured and examined at the Invermay Dunedin vet lab and found to be positive for fungus and bacteria consistent with mouldy feed.

It turns out “using up” the mouldy baleage and hay sitting out in the rain or leaky sheds didn't pay off this time – cases have stopped now on this farm. The same feed might pose a risk on farms pondering what to do with water-damaged feed after the recent flooding events.

*Fungal Placentitis*  
(Image credit Dr. Mark Swendrowski, MAFRI)



## Mycoplasma outbreak

The *Mycoplasma bovis* outbreak on several South Canterbury dairy farms has got many farmers worried. This is a new disease to New Zealand, with wide-ranging possible effects. We'd like to thank all of clients

who have followed this link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/mbovis> to the MPI survey, which seeks reassurance that the disease is not more widespread than we currently believe it to be. If you haven't been able to do so yet, a few minutes of your time now to complete the survey would be a valuable contribution to managing this situation. This is for the benefit of all New Zealanders, not just dairy farmers.

We've been asked whether it is possible for us to test cattle that are changing ownership for this disease as a safeguard— particularly bulls pre-breeding. Unfortunately, we can't. Testing is only available for animals that are suspected of having been in contact with the farm or animals where the disease has already been detected.

### **Heifer synchrony and AI**

Mating yearling heifers to AI provides many benefits. Most importantly, it speeds up the rate of genetic progress of the herd, by shortening the time it takes for new genes to enter the herd – more milk! Secondly it produces more heifer replacement calves, which can either join the herd or be sold. Thirdly it ensures that a good number of heifers calve early in the season, giving you time to focus on managing them at calving, and more time to get cycling post calving (fewer CIDR's!). Also, it gets the bulk of the heifer mating out of the way early, and it reduces bull power requirements.

By far the best way to synchronise the heifers is to use a CIDR device and series of injections, to bring them all on to heat on the same day for AI. This programme needs to start 9 days before the day you wish to AI them. If you haven't AI'ed heifers, this may be the season to take advantage of the many benefits it can provide.

### **WRAPPA blanket**

Low body temperature and ongoing heat loss are massive hurdles that most down cows must overcome, to recover. While the Duncan's jute cow cover is very popular and effectively offers protection to cows that need a bit of ongoing thermal support, this new blanket has been carefully designed and built by Matamata Saddlery to give down cows the best chances of raising their body temperature and recovering. The "survival blanket" is a really significant insulating layer that stays in place while the cow is down, but falls off when she stands up. Like many innovations, it has left us thinking "why didn't someone think of this earlier?". It's the sort of thing that every farm should probably have on hand to use on any down cows they may get.

1. Heavy duty canvas with insulated backline
2. Polar fleece neck cover



3. Magnetic neck closure for quick release when cow gets up
4. Weighted perimeter to secure the cover's position

### **Things to do in September:**

- Book groups in for metrichecking from 2 weeks post-calving
- Book calves in for debudding from 2 weeks and before 6 weeks of age
- Milking Management visit if you have concerns with your BMSCC
- Energy watch check on cows for ketosis
- ReproReady or InCalf discussion - topics that may come up: Metrichecking, BCS, trace element testing, BVD vaccination, bull fertility testing